



MID-CITIES COMMODORE CLUB

Dallas/Ft. Worth

MCCC NEWS

DECEMBER 1987

ISSUE 12

MCCC Constitution Changes

John Malmstrom

If you attended your November chapter meeting, you know that the Board of Directors has proposed a revision to our constitution. I want to take this opportunity to tell you a little of how the proposal came about and why I think it's important to the future of MCCC.

Every organization, large or small, requires a set of rules by which it should operate. For small groups a verbal agreement among the few members may be sufficient, but for organizations as large as MCCC, a more formal written set of rules is necessary. When I first became President nearly a year ago, one of the first things I did was read our Articles of Constitution to see just what our operating rules are. The more I read, the more confused I became because there are articles in our constitution that seem to contradict each other, others that are unclear in their meaning, and still others that simply cannot be followed if we are to be a viable organization. For example, there are references to a Board of Directors (apparently a club level body) and to an Executive Committee (apparently a chapter level body) where one term is used but the other is clearly meant. Another example is in the area of expenditure limits and approval requirements. Our current rules do not require the Treasurer to report expenditures to the Board of Directors as long as individual expenditures do not exceed \$25.00. (He does, but it's not required). Expenditures between \$25.00 and \$100.00 require prior approval of the Board, and expenditures of

expenditures \$100.00 require prior approval of the entire membership. If we had tried to abide with those requirements, events like our recent Metroplex Computer Conference could never be held. The time frame needed to obtain membership approval (30-60 days) is simply too long. (By the way, your Board of Directors approved expenditures of about \$900.00 for the conference, but we recovered about \$800.00 of that in increased memberships and disk sales. If the state hadn't frowned on our planned door prize raffle, we would have been able to replenish our treasury a bit.)

Our original constitution was drafted in 1983 when MCCC was first organized. It served our needs very well while we were small and all met together in one place every month. By 1985 the club had grown to over 500 members and was having difficulty meeting the needs of all our members, so we decided to reorganize into smaller chapter units while retaining the central club structure. At that time there was a revision to the constitution, but it did not address all the issues of how we need to operate. I (and the rest of the Board) felt that it was time to take a good look at just what was needed to bring the constitution up to date and make it usable for the future of MCCC. So, several months ago I appointed a committee consisting of Harold Williams, Bill Raecke, Fred Noble, and myself. This committee spent many hours (I remember only too well a couple of sessions that went well past midnite) cussing and discussing, writing and rewriting, and finally came to a consensus which was presented to the

Board last month. The Board voted to present the proposed revisions to the membership at the November chapter meetings and the vote on adoption will be taken at the special holiday club meeting on December 12.

Most of the proposed changes are for the purpose of clarification, but there are some that are considered substantive. Let me point out a few of those to you. (1) Quarterly club meetings will be replaced by special club events (such as our recent conference). (2) Proxy voting will be permitted on any issue (not just chapter elections). (3) Newsletter Editor and BBS Coordinator will be appointed offices on the Board of

Directors. (4) The Treasurer will be required to report all expenditures to the Board of Directors who will monitor all expenditures. Unusual expenditures outside of regular established club functions will still require approval of the membership. (5) Chapter presidents will automatically be members of the Board and additional chapter representation will be based on current chapter membership. (6) A provision has been added to permit dissolution of a chapter for non-activity or failing to comply with club rules.

If you didn't get a chance to see the proposal at your chapter meeting, the current constitution and the proposed revision are available for downloading in the reference section of the club's ASCII BBS (or see your chapter president). Be sure to attend the annual MCCC Holiday meeting at Brookside Convention Center in Hurst on December 12. We're looking forward to good fellowship for all...and of course we will have this important vote on the proposed revision to our constitution.

Economy Word Processor

Tom McNicholas, NJ

If you have a Commodore 128, you can generate quick notes without the use of your word processor or disk drive by doing the following.

First, type in AUTO 10 and press RETURN.

Then, type in the first line number as 10 and your first line of text, with RETURN at the end of the line. Make sure that your line length is not more than 80 characters. Enter each line, and when your message is finished, hit RETURN after the last line number.

Now, to get your message printed, type in:

```
POKE 24,37:OPEN 4,4:CMD 4:
LIST:PRINT#4:CLOSE 4
```

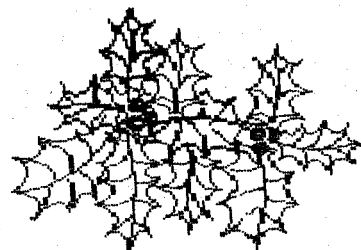
Make plans to attend the MCCC

Christmas Extravaganza

December 12
Brookside Convention Center

See back cover for details.

See you there!



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CLI Shortcuts for the *AMIGA*

Shortened Commands

Rigoberto Ramirez, Buckhannon, WV

Here is a shortcut that I found when using CLI on the Amiga. I went to the C directory and opened a number of commands, giving them shorter names. For example:

```
COPY C:DIR TO C:D
COPY C:ENDCLI TO C:END
COPY C:DELETE TO C:DEL
```

Now if I'm getting rid of a few old files, I just type DEL instead of DELETE. It saves a lot of time but there is a price. Each command that you COPY takes up about one block of space. You can RENAME commands, but programs need them under their old names, so be careful.

More Tips

Bryce Nesbitt Again, Berkeley, CA

ALIGNING PRINTER PAGE

After printing a file to your printer, you may find that the page is not aligned to the top of the next page. To send a top-of-form code to your printer type the following from CLI.

```
COPY * TO PRT
```

then press CTRL L, then CTRL \n, then RETURN.

ASSIGN

As you may or may not know, you can assign logical volume/device names to the physical disk drive names such as:

```
assign Source: df0:
assign Destination: Df1:
diskcopy source: to destination:
```

Useful? Yes, for some things.

Did you know you can also assign logical volume/device names to subdirectories?

```
assign from: df0:devs/printer
assign to: ram:
copy from: to to:
```

But the *FUN* one you may not have noticed is that you can assign to FILE

names (read commands). For example:

```
assign x: c:execute
assign e: c:ed
assign cc: df1:c/LC
```

Then use them in this fashion.

```
x:startup-sequence
e:my_text_file
cc: foo -i df1:include
```

Assigns are SYSTEM WIDE, not unique to each window.

Creating Data Disks

Bill Ott, St. Petersburg, FL

I have a quick mini-program that makes data disks for me. Using ED, create the following file.

```
echo "Formatting Drive DF1:"
format drive df1: name "Empty"
echo "Installing DF1:"
wait 4 secs
Install df1:
echo "Installed copy finished."
```

Save this file with a name kile FORMA 1 and when you need it just execute forma 1. Make sure you have an empty disk in DF1: rather than something you want to save. In the long run this may save you a little time and effort.

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Introducing...

Vanessa Bennett 1988 MCCC NEWS Editor

Beginning with the January issue, the MCCC NEWS will see a change as Vanessa Bennett assumes the exhaustive responsibilities of newsletter editor. Continuing a tradition of excellence, we look forward to having a fresh and creative viewpoint directing one of the most influential areas of the club's activities.

Vanessa and husband, Don, began attending MCCC meetings back in 1983 shortly after the club had formed. Don has served the club in various positions, currently as the Arlington Chapter President, and introduced Vanessa to Commodore equipment shortly after they were married.

The happy couple were even introduced by the computer over three years ago. Don and Vanessa made the initial connection through a computer dating board that was being run by a mutual friend from church. Their interest in computers began their relationship and continues to occupy many hours of sharing.

Vanessa currently holds a bachelor's degree in Art Education from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau and has logged more than 30 additional hours in computer science and drafting from TCJC and UTA. Programming and computer aided design as it applies to architecture have been recent areas of study and interest. With a minor in chemistry and physical science, she has taught over 4 years in middle school and high school science departments.

Vanessa has lived in Texas for 6 years where she relaxes with all sorts of craft projects. She particularly enjoys the creative side of art and regularly attends Scarborough Faire in Waxahachie to partake of all facets of the arts.

Don and Vanessa have just moved into a new house in Grand Prairie where they lead a quiet life arranging

furniture, playing with their Pomeranian and learning how to use new software packages.

Vanessa is quite interested in desktop publishing and will begin the newsletter year using their CI28, the club's Elite 5 daisy wheel and Star Gemini 10X printers and FontMaster 128.

Look for some great issues in the coming year.

TYPOS

Author Unknown
CCCC, Tucson, AZ

The typographical error is a slippery thing and sly;
You can hunt it 'til you're dizzy,
But it somehow will get by
'Til the forms are off the presses,
It is strange how still it keeps;
It shrinks down into the corner
And it never stirs or peeps.

The typographical error is too small for human eyes
'Til the ink is on the paper,
When it grows to mountain size.
The boss just stares with horror,
Then he grabs his hair and groans;
And the copy writer drops her head
Upon her hands and moans.

The remainder of the issue may be as clean as clean can be,
But the typographical error is the only thing you see!

What's T.H.I.S.?

Ronnie Koshimizu

MICRO AIDED DESIGNS has introduced T.H.I.S. (Technological Hybrid Integrated System). T.H.I.S. is a user-friendly drawing program designed exclusively for the Commodore 128 personal computer. T.H.I.S. supports the 1700 and 1750 RAM. Although the Ram may add to the operation cost, it allows you to perform many unique features with T.H.I.S. that are not found in other drawing programs.

T.H.I.S. has four drafting pages, all with a capacity of 95.5% of the computer screen. This is possible thanks to drop-down menus that allow you to make menu selections with ease.

Use real-time cutting, copying, pasting and dragging while actually seeing a portion of the screen being moved right before your eyes. Zoom in on the details with the Zoom feature which breaks the screen in two allowing you to view both the enlarged area and

the original area at the same time. Draw lines, boxes, circles, ellipses and arcs in elastic modes allowing you to do what other programs call rubberbanding.

Another unique feature is the Geometric Shapes Menu which gives you the ability to alter characteristics of a circle or an ellipse. By using this option you can create multi-sided objects and alter the rotation of an object to a single degree.

Either the Commodore 1351 mouse or the Flexidraw light pen may be used as input devices. Cursor keys are used for fine tuning in all drawing modes and for menu selections.

In addition to the Commodore 1571 disk drive, the 1541 and the new 1581 disk drives are supported. There is the option after purchase to exchange the 1571 disk for either a two disk set for the 1541 disk drive or a 3.5 inch disk for the 1581 disk drive. All disk functions are supported by T.H.I.S. and there may be as many as four disk drives accessed through the "Disk Window."

Cont'd on Page 9

Members, Meetings and Memories



THE NEW CONSULTANT

Scott Price
CCCC, Inc., Tucson, AZ

The New Consultant from Batteries Included is a database management system for the 64 and now for the 128 in either 40 or 80 column mode. Both versions are included on the disk; the 128 version will auto-boot upon power-up, but you must load the 64 version. The program also will run on CBM 8032, CBM 4032, and the PET 2001 (with 32K expansion) computers with the addition of a replacement ROM chip. It will run with one or two 1541/1571's or a dual drive system (4040, 8050, or 8250). The 64 version will also work in 80 column mode providing you have one of the 80 column adapters on the market. Batteries Included markets one of these. The program disk is not write protected and a back-up should be made for your work disk, saving the original for future back-ups. You must also format data disks for your use, and this is supported by the program. Batteries Included, instead of protecting the disk, chose to protect their program by the inclusion of a dongle which you must plug into a joystick port before loading the program. It will not work without this "key".

The New Consultant is a full-featured, quite powerful database management system. Instructions for creating record formats, entering data, and doing sorts/reports are quite straight-forward and easy to execute. The manual is thorough and easy to follow, as it guides you step-by-step through the processes needed to get your database up and running quite quickly, and leaving the more advanced procedures until later when you are more familiar with the terms and the capabilities of a database. I could find no fault with The Consultant on the structuring or ease of use in accessing records. It is efficient and one can become quite proficient in using it in a matter of hours.

Some good features that I noticed were the inclusion of 10 pre-formatted templates that you can use for your filing needs. Some of the templates included are Mail List, Inventory,

Catalog, Reciepes, Library, and Car. You may not want to use these at all, but they may serve you as a tutorial to give you some ideas that you would like to incorporate into your own file formats. Another feature I liked was the support programs included on the disk. REL-READ allows you to read the contents of relative files. HDR-READ displays a file definition of any file you choose, showing the number of fields with the number of the field, its name, type, and length of each field.

I liked the ability to backup the master disk, but in order to do that a high price must be paid. I refer to the aforementioned dongle. In a word, dongles are a "pain". For instance, on the 64 the dongle must be inserted in port 1, while on the 128 it must be in port 2. As I sometimes use one computer, sometimes another, 'which port does it go in this time?' Secondly, if you are also a user of Paperclip, a separate dongle must be used for that program. So while both programs claim to support each other, (files may be transferred from one to the other), I think unplugging one dongle, replacing it with another and rebooting the other program to be a "pain". I prefer the method that Superbase and Superscript 128 uses, namely, that both programs are resident in the computer simultaneously, and you just toggle back and forth between the two. An alternative for Paperclip/Consultant would be to have one dongle that supports both programs so that the plugging/unplugging would be eliminated. Also, while I'm complaining I might mention that, although the manual is quite well done, my version included not one but two addenda, which must constantly be consulted (pun intended) while trying to learn the program, again a "pain". Hopefully, future versions will be updated into a complete manual that can be read from start to finish.

If you are looking for a powerful database manager, The Consultant certainly ranks with the best among those for the 64/128. It is well thought out and well written.



1571 ROM UPDATE

Jason Auvenshine

Commodore recently made a ROM fix available for the 1571 Disk Drive. The new ROM is being installed in all new 1571s now, but those of us who bought our 1571s before the new ROM was being used now have the option of upgrading.

There were many bugs in the old ROM, some serious and some trivial. One of the most noticeable was the time it took a 1571 in 1571 mode to begin reading from a single-sided disk. This bug has been fixed, and the speed increase is very nice. Another one of the 'nuisance' type bugs was the BAM re-write bug. This caused the BAM on the backside to be rewritten every time a new block was written to the disk. This slowed things down significantly, but has been fixed in the new ROM. Also, when doing a GCR read in burst mode, the active LED did not come on in the old ROM.

The old ROM would not load scratch-protected files in burst mode, which made them next to impossible to get to if they were on the back side of the disk. Also, retries were not done in burst mode, which could sometimes return a read error when it was not really there. Another nuisance was the fact that, due to the BAM swap bug, the drive could lock up if the maximum number of files was open. And, in CP/M mode, the motor took too long to accelerate when reading an MFM disk, causing read errors.

All these bugs have been fixed as well. There were also some potentially damaging bugs in the old ROM. One of these was the legendary SAVE-with-replace bug. This has been fixed, and SAVE "0:filename" is (supposedly!) finally safe. Also, the set overflow flag was not disabled when exiting from the 1571 controller routines, which caused seemingly random problems, usually with RELATIVE files. Also, validating a double-sided disk in 1541 mode would cause the back side of the disk to become unavailable, and without direct disk editing, it was impossible to recover the back side of a disk. These two especially nasty ones have been fixed in the new ROM.

Many other miscellaneous bugs were

fixed as well, and the new ROM itself appears to be fairly well bug-free. The new ROM doesn't give you any extra features; it only allows you to properly use the ones which your drive was supposed to have in the first place. If you have been experiencing any of those bugs, you have the old ROM and should consider upgrading.

There is only one major problem I know of with having the new ROM installed in your 1571. With the new ROM installed, Fast Hack'em (a third party copy program) will no longer work with the drive. Since the makers of Fast Hack'em seem to have stopped, the chances of a new release to fix this problem are slim. If you use Fast Hack'em frequently, you may want to check into using another program before you have the ROM installed.

Other than that, I recommend that all 1571 owners be sure they have the new ROM in their drive. This will protect your disks and possibly YOUR sanity!

WAIT FOR KEYPRESS

Rick Swallow

WAIT 653.4 causes a program to pause until the CONTROL key is pressed. You'll find that, if you use 1,2, etc. in place of the 4, the program will wait until other key(s) are pressed. A 5, for example, causes a pause until either CONTROL or a SHIFT key is depressed. Experiment with it. Here's a short program to help you play with it. Just type it in and run it. After finding out the key or keys the WAIT allows, change the number after the 653 and go again.

```
10 PRINT CHR$(147) 'PRESS KEYS TO SEE
   WHICH ONE ALLOWS PRG TO GO ON'
20 WAIT 653.1
30 PRINT 'ARE YOU SURE THAT'S THE
   ONLY
   KEY IT WAITS FOR?'
```

The CHR\$(147) in line 10 causes the screen to clear. See the CHR\$ chart in your user's manual. You can't hurt your computer by typing in weird numbers.

[Ed. Note: I got some very interesting results--this is fun!]

Function Keys on the 128

D. Smither
Sacramento, CA

The C128 allows the most flexible string assignments that I have seen to date. Of primary interest is the ability to execute more than one function on one key. For example:

```
LOAD "NAME",8
```

```
LIST 100-1000
```

will load the specified program, then list the specified lines. If this were tried using a function key program on the C64, only the load function would be performed as these programs most often only execute up to the first carriage return. The rest chopped off, as in this case, after loading a program the computer does not return control back to the string assigned to the function key.

On the 128 we may, at any time, assign a string to a function key, either in direct mode or within a program. The easiest method in the extreme is to set up a routine in the boot block of a diskette, but that is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, we will simply load and run a program of function key assignments.

First, a bit of fun. We may all know that by pressing the SHIFT RUN/STOP key, the first program listed in the directory will load and run automatically. But to place our function key program at the top of the directory requires either some copy and rename work or some look ahead planning to be sure this will be the first program placed on a freshly formatted disk. Instead, let us use the default function key settings to our advantage and not worry about where the function key program sits in the directory. The only concern is that the name of the function key program have one of the following names: **DIRECTORY**, **SCNCLR**, **RUN**, **LIST** or **MONITOR**. Of the five, I prefer **SCNCLR** and here is why. When the computer is first turned on or is reset, Function Key #2 has **DLOAD** assigned to it. Function Key #4 has **SCNCLR (ret)** and Function Key #6 has **RUN (ret)**. Now this is very easy to do. Press in rapid succession F2, F4 and F6. You do not have to wait for the computer to catch up. This is the result.

```
DLOAD"SCNCLR(ret)
SEARCHING FOR D:SCNCLR
LOADING
READY.
RUN(ret)
```

```
READY
```

The function key assignments that you have specified in your program are now engaged. As for the program itself, the following are my favorite assignments.

```
10 KEY1,"DLOAD[18 CRSR Rights]"
+CHR$(27)+"Q"+CHR$(13)
```

Function Key #1 has the load-a-file command. If this key is used in conjunction with the directory listing, the word **DLOAD** is printed over the blocks number, the cursor skips over the file name, the **ESC Q** deletes everything from the cursor to the edge of the screen (namely, **PRG**) and the line is entered with the character 13.

```
20 KEY2,"SCRA'T'[18CRSR Rights]"
+CHR$(27)+"Q"+CHR$(13)+"Y"+CHR$(27)
+"Q"+CHR$(157)
```

Function Key #2 has the scratch-a-file command. If this key is used in conjunction with a directory listing, the word **SCRAT** (shifted T) is printed over the blocks number, the cursor skips over the file name, the **ESC Q** deletes everything from the cursor to the edge of the screen and this part of the line is entered with the character 13. The 128 will ask you to affirm your intention to scratch and you do so by pressing the return key.

```
30 KEY3,"[CLR][BLK]DI'R'[CYN]U8"+CHR$(13)
+"[2 CRSR Up][BLK] WINDOW 40,0,79,24,1"
+CHR$(13)+DI'R'[CYN]U9"+CHR$(13)
+"[2 HOME]"
```

Function Key #3 has the directories. My system consists of two drives and I often need to see the directories of both of them. Function Key #3 will print drive 8 and window drive 9 on the right side of the same screen.

```
50 KEY5,"DSAVE[18 CRSR Rights]"
+CHR$(27)+"Q"[16 CRSR Lefts]"
```

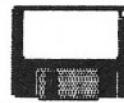
Function Key #5 has the save-a-file command. If this key is used in conjunction with the directory listing, the word **DSAVE** is printed over the

blocks number or SCRA'T', the cursor skips over the file name, the ESC deletes everything from the cursor to the edge of the screen and the cursor skips back to the first letter in the filename. This allows you to edit the filename if you wish.

70 KEY7:"OPEN4,4:CMD4:LIST"+CHR\$(13)+
"P'R'4:CLOSE4"+CHR\$(13)

Function Key #7 has the list-to-printer command. The appropriate commands cause the computer to list the program in memory on the printer rather than screen.

Please note that nothing has been placed on Function Keys #4, #6 or #8.



What's T.H.I.S.?
cont'd from Page 5

Program expansion is already in the works for those of you unable to get enough of T.H.I.S. New editions will expand the program up to four times its original size. The function key set is the doorway to linking T.H.I.S. not only to the new editions, but also to other graphic-related programs. There is access to a font generator, an animation program and even the "Trade Show Caddy," a combination of user-friendly software for displaying product lines.

We've come a long way...

MCCC NEWS
Mid-Cities Commodore Club
Issue 13
April 1984

MEMBERSHIP
We now have over 420 members. Yearly dues are \$20.00 payable in January and prorated quarterly. Send dues or questions to the return address on the back cover. Dues cover the costs of running the club including the local chapters, printing and mailing this newsletter, and the acquisition of public domain software.

MEETINGS
Club meetings are held quarterly and chapter meetings are held monthly depending on the desires of each chapter.

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IN THIS ISSUE:
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PRINTING COLOURS
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MERGING FILES

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The Transactor
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Printer Utility Program
and much more.



Technical Analysis System

Review by John Premack Boston Computer Society

Ed. Note: We thought with the recent stock market activity, this article belonged on the front page! See if you agree.

Either I'm getting easier to please or software for the Commodore just keeps getting better. I suspect it's the latter. Having just spent several hours with TAS-128, a Technical Analysis System from Abacus Software which performs stock market evaluations using the C-128, I am suitably in awe of the number of ways this program can monitor the behavior of stocks and other securities.

As a long-time advocate of the dashboard technique for stock selection, I discovered that I had a lot to learn about technical analysis methods. Simply stated, I was confirming or denying my future performance.

As 50 securities on the screen, I was able to view 275 periods of security. You can perform this chore in a matter of seconds. The program is configured to auto-update either Warner's or Service's portfolio or just enter a stock's name. You're ready to go. TAS-128 will print and figure out the trends.

bands, and volume indicators. An oscillator function allows the program to calculate momentum, advance/decline, and TRIN indicators. In addition, you can utilize as many as five different volume indicators: negative, positive, on-balance, price volume trend, and daily volume.

Noice analysts will be grateful for the series of menus which guide you through each step of the various analysis options. Once you know what you want to accomplish, it is faster to skip the menu by entering two-letter commands. These commands can even be combined for rapid entry or stored as macros that will perform a series of predetermined functions automatically.

All plots are first drawn to the computer's 80-column screen and can be dumped to the printer in your choice of three sizes. Since hardcopy commands can be incorporated into customized macros, TAS-128 can be incorporated into customized several different charts without constant operator intervention. This is a handy feature since it allows the computer to generate a set of data while you go about your business.

The instructions indicate that the program supports Epson compatibles as well as the Mannebaum Tally Sprite 80 and Olivetti PR 2300 printers. Early Commodore printers which cannot handle 640- and 200-line graphics will not work with this program. I encountered a few minor problems printing to a Star Gemini 10x using a Carico G-Whiz interface. After printing a few minor renditions of the four graphs currently on screen, I called for a printout of the data used in calculating the graphs. The printer driver apparently failed to initialize the printer, and the result was text printed



Thanks for the opportunity.

Barbara J. Cramer

TALK TO YOUR PRINTER

George Pope

CCCC, Tucson, AZ

Many of us talk to our printers on a regular basis. HOWEVER, much of that talk could not be printed here and distributed to a family audience. I hope the following will help those of you that want to learn what your printer can do for you rather than what you can do for your printer. I say you for presumably I cannot be included since if I were included I would not be qualified to write the article. Confused? Me too now!

Down to basics. There are essentially two kinds of printers - Commodore and non-Commodore. Some are easy to identify. Non-Commodore printers REQUIRE a separate interface between the printer and the computer. Now comes the first curve. Commodore printers are printers either marketed with the Commodore Logo OR are in such a manner as to NOT require a separate interface. To summarize:

Non-Commodore

Require separate interface

(Okidata 92, 192, Panasonic 1091, 1092, Star-Micronics SG10, NX-10 & more)

Commodore

By Commodore

(1526, 1526, 801, & more)

Others

(Okidata 120, Star-Micronics SG10C, SL10C & more)

Confused? Most are. The Commodore type printers that are marketed under a non-Commodore name (SG10C, Okil20) have interface logic built in so that they 'emulate' a Commodore printer. Most commonly, the Commodore 1525 is the printer they emulate. The 1525 was the earliest printer available to plug directly into the C-64 computer. Unfortunately it became the 'standard' for compatibility. I say 'unfortunately' because so many printers do so much more better and faster. At the time, the 1525 was great, but as with most things in the world of computing, the developments don't stand still very long and machines made to an antiquated standard rapidly become obsolete.

THE 1525. A good little machine when introduced, it will print double size and will do Commodore graphics. It will not vary from its 10 cpi (characters per

inch horizontal format) except double size. It will not underline or print variable vertical spacing, NLQ, etc.

OTHER PRINTERS that 'emulate' the 1525 generally do so very well and the problem arises only when you must make the printer do things that the 1525 will not, such as underline or 17 cpi type. However, this is suitable for the needs of some people.

PRINTERS

Aside from coming to you through a wide assortment of manufacturers and with a variety of capabilities, they also come in various levels of JUNK ratings. I am not going to get into the rating of individual printers in this article, merely point out generically some strong points and weaknesses, as well as trade-offs that are out there in the marketplace. This is intentional since my junk may be someone else's treasure and that is not the point of this article.

If a printer plugs directly into the Commodore computers (C-64, C-128), it is commonly referred to as a 'Commodore compatible.' This means that the computer memory built into the printer makes it behave like a Commodore (for some this is enough).

Other printers must have a separate interface. We now have a computer in the computer talking to a computer in the interface talking to a computer in the printer. No wonder they get confused. Since the success or failure of a computer routine is dependent upon the ability of the programmer doing the programming, we get a variation in the degree of success that these machine conversations achieve.

The Non-Commodore printers come in roughly two standard configurations. Serial and parallel. Now some more confusion. Commodore routinely addresses its printers through the 'serial' port (same as the disk drive). Do we therefore need a serial printer. NO! repeat NO!. The interfaces are so set up as to take the serial output from the Commodore computer and translate it to the configuration necessary to properly feed the 'parallel' requirements of the printer. Specifically the 'Centronics parallel'

requirements of the printer. For the record, non-Commodore 'serial' printers can be made to work with the Commodore output through the RS232 port of the Commodore. This is the port commonly used for the modem, located at the left rear of the computer as you face it from the keyboard side.

Generally the 'serial' printer costs more and is more difficult to interface. The Commodore 'RS232' port is not the same as the 'RS232' referred to generally in the industry. Tradeoffs include speed, type style, type size, line spacing, graphics compatibility, cost, and interface requirement as generally the most important. I didn't say it was going to be easy. Briefly, data is sent to a 'serial' device one bit at a time like a long freight train. A 'parallel' device normally deals in batches of bits, eight at a time, and is therefore normally faster. It is somewhat academic when we deal with printers for home computers since the printer is terribly slow when compared to the speed of the computer. It can make a difference in other peripherals such as the disk drive.

INTERFACES

These devices interpret the signal from the computer for the printer. They do so in a variety of ways and at a variety of speeds. Few interfaces are fully compatible with all printers. In fact, anytime anyone associated with the computer industry says that something is 100% compatible, he is usually either lying or terribly ill-informed. Some interfaces have tiny dip switches that allow you to mechanically make selections from the variety of options available within the interface. Others only offer software (type in your own direct computer commands) changes, and some offer a variety of combinations of both. Needless to say, there is a fantastically broad selection to choose from or be confused by. My personal selection is an interface that can be either programmed or forced to the configuration that I want. Another option offered within the variety of interfaces available include variable size buffers that allow the interface to accept output from the computer at computer speeds (very fast) and hold the data for the relatively slow printer. Naturally the bigger the buffer, the more it will hold, and successful transfer is dependent upon the software being utilized in the computer. There are fast and slow word processors and other

programs too for that matter. At least one interface offers the option of loading different type fonts (styles) into the buffer space and then accessing those different fonts for printer output. A word of caution here is that it doesn't necessarily work with all printers. Still another case of 'buyer beware.'

Of the printer problems I have been asked about, the vast majority can be traced to an interface that never should have been released for public consumption. The tradeoffs include speed, buffer, compatibility, convenience, and to a slight degree cost.

Let's get down to brass tacks! Would you believe direct commands?

ASCII

All printers understand commands in a common manner. Specifically, they rely on ASCII code (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) to receive their commands. Unfortunately, Commodore ASCII is not the same as standard ASCII (thus the need for the interface to make the interpretation). Generally, ASCII values below about 30 are understood by the printer to be commands for it to do something. Above 30 they normally refer to a letter or number or the like. Now 30 numbers is not a great deal for telling the printer what to do and greatly limits the

New BBS Numbers

ASCII Board:

268-4191

Graphics Board:

268-4196

options. The solution was an 'ESCAPE' code. This is normally an ASCII 27 and indicates to the printer that the code that comes down the line next is not to be printed, rather it is an additional command code. Thus we get the ability to send many more command codes to the printer. Here too there is no standardization and a 68 to one printer may have a totally different effect on another. As a result 'families' of printers have grown up. The two most common within the Commodore community that I am familiar with are the 'Epson' which includes as a minimum the Epson, Star-Micronics, and Panasonic brands, as well as others that use similar ASCII coding. The second is the Okidata group. Even within a group, or for that matter a single manufacturer, codes will vary from machine to machine and create little idiosyncrasies. Generally the computer sends ASCII code to the printer via the Basic command CHR\$(n) where the n equals the ASCII decimal number, e.g., CHR\$(27). For your information, the ASCII used by Commodore is lovingly called either PETSCII or PET ASCII.

DIRECT COMMANDS

Now computers are terribly dumb devices. They don't do what we want them to, only what we tell them to and we must do it EVERY time in great detail. They can't be housebroken like a puppy. The command to reach the printer takes the form of 'PRINT#n'. Again the n equals a variable that is dependent upon the channel that has been opened to 'talk' through. Many printer owners manuals will confuse us here because they don't recognize the PRINT# format. They talk about LPRINT. Now LPRINT is fine for such inferior machines as the IBM and similarly programmed machines, but it simply doesn't hack it for the Commodore. The printer makers haven't awakened to the fact yet that there are more Commodore computers out there than the other kinds. Herein also lies one of the pitfalls of addressing the printer from the Commodore. Normally the Commodore is a very friendly computer for program input. It readily accepts commands that have spaces within the command sequence and those that don't, unlike many other makers that require space breaks in all commands. When addressing the printer (or for that matter the disk) with commands that have a '*' in them

(GET#, PRINT# are examples), the command must have no spaces in it or it will cause a crash because PRINT#, GET# are 'words' in BASIC.

COMMAND SEQUENCE

In order for a command sequence to reach the printer there is a specific routine that must be followed. FIRST: OPEN2,4 (This opens a communications channel to the printer here shown with a 2, and specifies the device 4 which is understood by the computer to be the printer as an 8 specifies the disk drive. The communication channel shown here with a 2 is an optional number and a wide range is available. I use the number 2 so that you can readily identify which number I'm talking about. Many use an OPEN4,4 which is acceptable but makes it harder to identify which digit you are addressing. SECOND: PRINT#2;text to be printed' (This command tells the computer to print to communications channel 2 the information inside the quotes. An alternate command at this point would be to effect a command direction to the printer in which case the command would look like: PRINT#2,CHR\$(12) We therefore have a means of getting commands or text to the printer. When everything has been done at the printer that you want to accomplish, we are then ready for the third step). THIRD: PRINT#2:CLOSE2 (Again we address the communication channel 2 and not the device number. In fact, we have only addressed the device in the original command and the computer remembers that communications channel 2 is for this series of commands reserved for device #4 - the printer. A good rule of programming comes into play here. When you OPEN something, it must be CLOSED. Here the PRINT#2 command serves to clear the buffer in the printer and prevent its contents from screwing up future activities and then closes the channel off from further use until specifically opened by another direct command.) The printer is addressed in this manner for almost all activities, and though it may appear more complicated on the surface, in all probability it will look like the above under close analysis. Let's look at a couple of useful routines. One common task that we ask our printers to do is to dump listings to the printer. The same set of commands is used to dump a BASIC program as is used to list the directory from a disk.

The steps are as follows:

1. Load the program to be listed or the disk directory into the memory of the computer.

2. Type OPEN2:4:CMD2:LIST and hit the RETURN key. The printer should chug away until the contents have been reduced to little colored marks on the paper.

3. When the printer stops, complete the series with: PRINT#2:close2 and hit the RETURN key. Notice how familiar the commands sound? The only new items we have added to the set are the CMD command that tells the computer to send all future execution commands to the printer and then we tell it to LIST and away it goes. Don't think you've found a shortcut to your programming efforts by using the CMD and then utilizing normal instead of the commands with the # in them. You may get away with it for a while, but ultimately it will jump up and attack you when you least need it. This is contrary to the stuff we were fed four years ago when the 'experts' were asked and we were told it was 'impossible' to do. It ain't impossible, just impractical.

INTERFACES - A final look

The interface can allow you to do many things. A good interface will give you the control necessary for the following:

ONE: Set the printer configuration so that if you change printers you don't have to also buy a new interface.

TWO: Be easy to set (change) the mode from emulate to transparent and back again.

THREE: Set the printer for automatic line feed or no line feed so that the printer can be utilized by a variety of programs. Routinely the normal setting is for automatic line feed to be on, and then you may have to change it for certain programs like Print Shop to a no line feed configuration.

FOUR: Device number recognition. The default printer name for Commodore computers is 4. [Except the 1520 printer-plotter, which is 6.] Most printer interfaces and the Commodore printers and computers give you the option of having another printer on line at the same time with the identification of 5. Therefore, the interface can be set to talk to the printer as either 4 or 5 as the operator or programmer wishes.

Different specialized interfaces provide other options. The downloadable extra type fonts for one example. Others include the capability of lodging a separate program into the interface so that it controls or modifies the computer output before it reaches the printer and causes other specialized events to occur. The limit is about the same as the limits on the imagination, and I feel confident that as time passes, brilliant programmers and engineers will find more and more exciting things to do with our hardware. As a note, just because your interface doesn't have little dip switches doesn't mean it can't do something. Read your owner's manual again with an eye to what you have learned about your printer since you got it and in light of this article. You may be pleasantly surprised by what you can do.

WORD PROCESSING

Word processing brings out a slight modification to the 'Talk to the Printer' process. If you have a Commodore printer like the 1525, 1526, or 801 for example, there is little you can do as pointed out earlier. A Commodore 'compatible' printer offers a few more options, but you are still limited. A Centronics parallel full-featured printer gives you a wide range of options. There are, however, a few cautions. How have we learned of these? The hard way. Someone has paid the price for a new printer or interface and learned it was good or bad as the case may be and if bad has taken his or her lumps and learned. The generous ones have shared that information and thereby saved others from the same mistakes. There are good interfaces and there is junk. There are good printers and there is junk. There are good word processors and "surprisingly, while there is some junk, it's not as prevalent as in the aforementioned categories. How do you find out what you need? Talk to others, find someone with the combination you think you want and ask about it. If you can't find it, you may decide to be one of the pioneers that finds out about a new product. Back to the topic at hand. Many word processors (WPs) have 'printer files' supplied with the program that can be loaded into the word processor so that be loaded into the word processor so that the word processor with a standardized formatting sequence can tell the printer what to do. This is especially

handy for use with a variety of printers since you don't have to do extensive file modification to print out your file. Frequently these same word processors will provide you with the option to customize your own printer file or prepare a file for a printer not on their pre-programmed list. Examples include Paperclip, SuperScript, Paperback/Pocket Writer, and Word Pro. Other WPs allow you to customize codes at the head of your document and then call specific functions with a couple keystrokes. Examples here include Paperclip, SpeedScript, Word Pro, and Easy Script.

In any case, whether you are setting up a printer file, using a pre-configured file or calling the shots directly, you have the option of specific command sequences to make the printer do what you want it to. I mentioned earlier about the ASCII numbers to about 30 being reserved for command functions. These are the commands that must be carefully imbedded into the WP or printer file. They will access those special functions. Many of the better WPs have the ESCAPE (Chr\$(27)) function pre-programmed (that saves one code option) and the ESCAPE function combined with one or two additional alpha or numeric codes will get your printer to do everything short of backflips. The printer doesn't see the letter or number following the ESCAPE, rather it takes the ASCII number associated with that letter and performs the function as outlined in the printer control codes section of the printer owner's manual. Sound simple? NO? It really is once you get it working the first time.

The purpose of this article is not to tell you how but rather to let you know that it can be done. It simply isn't possible to cover the wide variety of printers, interfaces and WPs even if I had the specific knowledge to do so. It is simply too voluminous and too ever-changing. How can you learn? Simple. Generate scrap paper. Fanfold paper comes at about \$15 for 2500 sheets locally. You literally have many hundreds of dollars invested in your computer system. It seems a shame that for a couple of dollars in wasted paper you would forego the pleasures of learning the capabilities of your system and utilizing them to the fullest. The minimal investment is well worth it. Seems natural you say? I unfortunately have met many that haven't. Whether they were intimidated by the dumb little beastie or not I can't say. It doesn't

hurt to make mistakes on your computer. You will generate scrap paper, perhaps crash a program or two that you can simply reload. You may even get frustrated and talk to your printer the way we mentioned at the start of this article. But hang in there and you can beat it! How do I know? I've been there! So read the owner's manual for your interface and printer, and reread them periodically for new insight into the use of the devices. Make your system work for you instead of you working for the system. Invest some time to learn the various capabilities and how to access them. The result will be a payback from your investment, fun with the ability you will gain, and most of all the feelings of success you will experience. HAPPY COMPUTING !!

Fort Worth Chapter News

Mary Louise
Hagemeyer



The Fort Worth Chapter thanks Bob Krause for demonstrating DPAINT, the program he uses to put those funny armadillos on the graphics board.

A few members have agreed to serve as next year's chapter officers, but we need more volunteers. If you can help, please call Joe Ostrokol. We will vote at a chapter caucus during the club's Christmas meeting on December 12.

The next chapter meeting will be January 9, 1988. Join us as we bring the in the new year.

Odds and Ends

Quick Screen Dump to Printer

To print a screen display (does not work with high resolution, however) enter:

```
1 OPEN#4:OPEN#3:PRINT "[HOME]";FOR I=1
  TO 1000 STEP 40:FOR J=1 TO 40
2 GET#3,A$:PRINT#4,A$;NEXT J:PRINT#4:
  NEXT I:CLOSE 3:CLOSE 4
```

Loading One Program from Another

The second program may replace the one currently in memory entirely, or, it may be a set of machine language subroutines which enhance a main program.

```
10 IF SW1=0 THEN SW1=1:
LOAD"MLprogram",8,1
```

Whenever a load is executed under program control, existing variables are not cleared but the program re-enters at the beginning line number. Thus, the need for SW1.

Disable/Enable RUN/STOP and RESTORE Keys

```
Disable RUN/STOP: POKE 808,239
Disable both keys: POKE 808,225
Restore normal operation:
POKE 808, 237
```

Be careful with Search and Replace

An accountant wanted to change a recurrent "To Customers" with the replacement string "By Customers," so he fed in the instructions to change "to" to "by". The results... BY CUSBYMERS.

From Reader's Digest, via The Com-Line

Good judgement comes
from experience;
Experience comes from
bad judgement.

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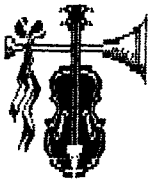
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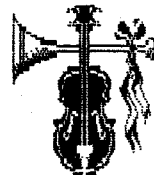
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It's time for the Third Annual MCCC

Christmas Extravaganza

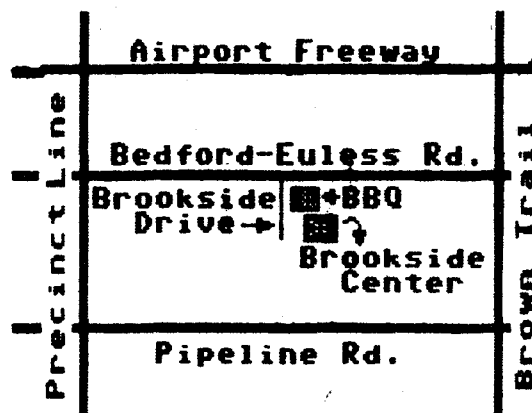


Saturday, December 12 1:30 - 5:00 pm
Brookside Convention Center

This year the club will be providing only the drinks for this occasion. Members are encouraged to bring all types of snacks, desserts, cookies and appetizers for the enjoyment of all.

While we will conduct a small amount of formal business, there will be no guest speaker or presentational demonstration. For this reason, we would like to encourage you to bring software and equipment. Bring public domain programs to share or your favorite program to demonstrate on a personal basis.

Whatever your choice, come and just enjoy the fun.



MCCC NEWS

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